Facultad de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Grado en Relaciones Internacionales

Trabajo Fin de Grado

Cultural Diplomacy as a tool for Imperialist Japan during the 1930s:
The Case of the Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai

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Madrid, junio 2023

Abstract

Throughout history, "people have used culture to present themselves, to assert their power, and to understand others" (Bound & Briggs, et.al, 2007). As argued to Bound and Briggs, we can state that culture is and has always been inherent to human nature, in the same way that it has been present (to a lesser or broader extent) in all states and societies' exchange processes and foreign policy for decades. However, it wasn't until the second half of the 21st century that culture wasn't conceived as an actual instrument of politics or diplomacy.

Traditionally, the bulk of importance regarding balance of power in international relations was in terms of military and economic factors. Nevertheless, over the last decade, several events have contributed to the rise on importance of culture amongst IR scholars and policymakers, leading to the recognition of cultural diplomacy as the third pillar and unquestionable element in present-day foreign policy and diplomatic relations. In the same way, the significance of cultural diplomacy is located within a broader debate on soft power, concept coined by Joseph Nye in the early 1900s, which relies on the ability to co-opt through notions of attraction and influence, rather than to coerce (Bukh, 2014).

Taking the previous into consideration, the use of cultural diplomacy and other forms of soft power by the imperial japan of 1930s will be analyzed throughout the present investigation. Japan's ability to attract others through its cultural resources has always been extraordinary, which has led many scholars to refer to Japan as a "soft power superpower" (Watanabe and McConnell, 2008).

CONTENT

Introduction

<u>Japan as a soft power "superpower"</u>

Japan, often recognized as a "soft power superpower" (Watanabe and McConnell, 2008), has demonstrated an impressive capacity to exert influence over others through its culture, values, and ideas over time. Despite being a relatively small country with limited natural resources, Japan has historically been considered a pioneering nation in its use of soft power as a means of cultural diplomacy and excelled in gaining international influence for many decades. Over the years, Japan has managed to wield a significant amount of soft power on the global stage and has lately reached extensive cultural influence and popularity throughout the world.

Despite Japan's imperialist ideals, attitudes, and actions during the first half of the 20th century, and its transformation in the postwar period, Japan has still managed to attain a largely favorable reputation in the international community. To this day, Japan is widely recognized as a technologically advanced and innovative society, with generally well-respected products and services highly demanded around the world. Japan's technological prowess and innovative spirit have helped to create a perception of Japan as a modern and forward-thinking society and have contributed to its reputation as a global leader in science and technology. Also known for its strong commitment to social harmony and respect for the rule of law, Japan has a reputation for being a peaceful and law-abiding society with high standards of living and quality education. Additionally, Japanese modern and traditional culture, has been enjoyed and appreciated by people all over the world, and has contributed to a positive image of Japan as a modern and creative society.

Even during the 1930s, a period when Japan was fully engaging in imperialist actions, its impressive use of cultural diplomacy has allowed it to establish a significant international influence and contributed to its success and overall positive image in the international community. Therefore, Japan's current standing as a "soft power superpower" showcases the perfect example and potential for a nation to positively influence the world through culture.

Purpose and motives

    a. Relevance of the topic and reasons for the work

The investigation into the use of cultural diplomacy and soft power as a tool for imperialist Japan during the 1930s is highly relevant to our understanding of the role of cultural diplomacy and soft power in international relations, and to the history of Japan's foreign policy during this period. By examining how Japan used cultural diplomacy and soft power to promote its imperialist agenda in the 1930s, this investigation sheds light on the ways in which cultural exchanges, propaganda, and public diplomacy can be used as a means of projecting power and influence on the world stage. Furthermore, this investigation also highlights the complex and often contradictory nature of Japan's foreign policy during this period, as it sought to assert its dominance in Asia while also promoting a vision of cultural unity and solidarity among Asian nations. As such, this investigation has important implications for our understanding of the history of Japan's engagement with the wider world, and for our understanding of the role of cultural diplomacy and soft power in contemporary international relations.

    b. Purpose and objectives

The **purpose** of the present academic research is to evaluate Japan's utilization of cultural diplomacy as a means of advancing imperialistic objectives throughout the 1930s. More specifically, the evolution of Japan's cultural diplomacy from "soft power" to "hard power" within the framework of imperialist escalation, highlighting the shift from initial endeavors focused on cooperation, exchange, and mutual understanding towards the utilization of propaganda, imposition, and domination. Alongside the main purpose, a series of investigation **objectives** have been set:

- To explore the historical context and the ways in which imperialist Japan utilized cultural diplomacy and similar tools during the 1930s to further its imperialist objectives. In other words, to provide a comprehensive overview of Japan's use of cultural diplomacy and soft power during the 1930s and its significance for the history of Japan's engagement with the wider world.

- To analyze the utilization of cultural diplomacy and soft power by Japan in achieving its foreign policy objectives, as well as the specific strategies, significant cultural institutions, and practices employed by the country during the 1930s. The focus lies on how Japan sought to advance its imperialist goals, exert influence, and project a favorable international image through various cultural means.

Linked to the previous objectives, a series of **research questions** will guide the investigation process, seeking to understand how the cultural policies and initiatives implemented by Japan have shaped and influenced the country's reputation over the years. How did Imperialist Japan use cultural diplomacy and soft power to project its influence in Asia and beyond during the 1930s? What were the key cultural institutions, and practices that Japan used to promote its image and influence abroad during this period? How did Japan's use of cultural diplomacy shape its relations with the international arena?

State of the art

Increasingly, over the last decades, considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to the exploration of topics related to cultural diplomacy and the utilization of culture to advance state relations and foreign policy objectives. A substantial body of research exists, examining various aspects of this phenomenon, as studies and scholars have examined the strategies employed by states in utilizing culture as a soft power tool, analyzing the effectiveness of cultural initiatives in enhancing diplomatic efforts, fostering intercultural understanding, and projecting national identity and influence. Some examples of academic literature within this area of research that have been widely helped in the present investigation entail *Culture as an instrument of diplomacy* by J.N. Dixit (1979), *Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy* by Eytan Gilboa (2008), *The role of cultural diplomacy in international relations* by Said Saddiki (2009), *The art of Diplomacy: Exhibitions and National Promotion* by Roland Flamini (2014), *Cultural diplomacy: what is it and what is it not?* by Fabiola Rodríguez Barba (2015), or *Cultural Diplomacy. An exploratory note* by the same author, amongst others. This rich corpus of research has contributed to our understanding of the intricate interplay between culture, diplomacy, and international politics, shedding light on the complex dynamics shaping contemporary statecraft.

Likewise, the investigation of Japan's utilization of soft power and cultural diplomacy is an active area of research within multiple academic circles. Scholars from diverse disciplines have actively engaged in researching this area, uncovering valuable insights, and contributing to ongoing debates. For instance, *Revisiting Japan's Cultural Diplomacy: A Critique of the Agent-Level Approach to Japan's Soft Power* by Alexander Bukh (2014), *Geopolitics and Soft Power: Japan's Cultural Policy and Cultural Diplomacy in Asia* by Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin (2012), *Cultural Diplomacy in U.S.-Japanese Relations 1919-1941* by Jon Thares Davidann (2007), *Civilization, Race, and the Japan Expedition's Cultural Diplomacy, 1853–1854* by

Jeffrey A. Keith (2011), *Japan and the Rise of Heritage in Cultural Diplomacy: Where Are We Heading?* by Natsuko Akagawa (2016), *Power and Culture: Japan's Cultural Diplomacy in the United States, 1934–1940* by John Gripentrog (2015), amongst others. Although the subject is complex and multifaceted, a significant and expanding body of scholarly literature exists, examining key aspects such as the phenomenon of "Cool Japan," the contemporary application of cultural diplomacy by Japan, and Japan's evolving relationships with other nations in Asia and beyond. Scholars have extensively analyzed the concept of "Cool Japan," which refers to the strategic promotion of Japanese popular culture and products as a means of enhancing the nation's soft power and global influence. Some examples entail articles like *Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of 'Cool Japan' and the Challenges of Cultural Planning in a Postmodern Age* by Michal Daliot-Bul (2009), or *Nation branding through stigmatized popular culture: the "Cool Japan" craze among central ministries in Japan* by Takeshi Matsui (2014). Moreover, researchers have examined modern strategies, and outcomes of Japan's cultural diplomacy efforts, assessing how cultural exchanges, artistic performances, language education, and other forms of cultural engagement shape Japan's relationships with other countries. Also, there is considerable research regarding the exploration of Japan's relations with other Asian nations and its engagement with the global community.

Nevertheless, the examination of Japanese imperialism during the 1930s remains a relatively unexplored area within scholarly discourse. Particularly noteworthy is the dearth of academic research and literature focusing on Japan's utilization of cultural diplomacy during this period of military expansion and imperialistic pursuits. This notable research gap may be attributed to several factors, including the historical context and terminology associated with cultural diplomacy and soft power that were not yet established during the 1930s. The 1930s marked a significant phase of Japan's aggressive military expansion and imperialist endeavors, however, even though for Japan exerting political and military dominance was a primary focus, the employment of cultural diplomacy as a distinct strategy in the achievement of those imperialist motives has been widely overlooked in present academia. It is important to acknowledge that the concepts of cultural diplomacy and soft power had not yet emerged or gained widespread recognition during the 1930s. As a result, the historical narrative surrounding Japan's imperialistic actions in the 1930s often emphasizes political, military, and economic aspects, overlooking the significance of cultural diplomacy as a distinct dimension of Japan's foreign policy. That said, although few, there are certain books that particularly address this matter, such as *Tumultuous Decade: Empire, Society, and Diplomacy in 1930s*

Japan, edited by Masato Kimura and Tosh Minohara, published by the University of Toronto Press.

However, it is worth noting that Japan played a pioneering role in utilizing cultural elements to further its imperialistic ambitions, even if the explicit terminology of cultural diplomacy was not prevalent at the time. Japan's imperialistic endeavors in the 1930s were accompanied by efforts to project its cultural and national identity onto the territories it occupied. The establishment of cultural institutions, promotion of Japanese language and customs, and assimilation policies in occupied territories can be viewed as early manifestations of cultural diplomacy, albeit without the explicit conceptual framework associated with the term. Hopefully, with this new research and investigation I will be shedding light on previously neglected aspects of this complex and often controversial historical period.

Theoretical Framework

<u>Cultural Diplomacy</u>

From the earliest of human societies, the world has undergone countless transformations. Throughout time, from wars to revolutions and political movements all around the world have shaped the international system, its mechanism and the way states behave with one another, continuously altering the course of history. Since the end of World War II onwards, the number of international treaties and human rights conventions have greatly increased, resulting in the diminishing acceptance of violence and the use of force. Even though alternative ways of exerting influence amongst states have long existed, violence and military force has traditionally been the most popular and result-driven of them all. However, especially since the second half of the 20th century, the world stage has witnessed a considerable shift in the way states pursue their individual agendas and interact with one another. In 1975, Henry Kissinger, a strong advocate of classical balance-of-power politics, acknowledged in a speech that the world was entering a new era. He recognized that traditional international patterns were disintegrating due to the increasing interdependence of the world in terms of economics, communications, and human aspirations.

Throughout history, people have used culture to showcase themselves, exert power and influence, and to understand others (Bound, Briggs, et.al, 2007). According to Bound and Briggs (2007), we can state that culture is and has always been inherent to human nature, in the

same way that it has been present (to a lesser or broader extent) in all states and societies' exchange processes and foreign policy for decades. Author Rodríguez Barba (2015) in her article *Cultural diplomacy. What is it and what it isn't?* highlights that although culture and its associated concepts, have long been integral to the foreign policy strategies of numerous nations, their importance in global relations has witnessed a notable upsurge in recent years (Rodríguez Barba, 2015). The following section will delve into the notion of "cultural diplomacy," elucidating its significance, objectives, and distinctions from analogous terminologies within the domain of culture in the IIRR context.

Over the past three decades, there has been a notable transformation in the role of culture within the realm of state diplomacy. Following the conclusion of the Cold War in the 1990s, there has been a significant reevaluation and transformation of the role of culture in state diplomacy, acknowledging its dual function as both a diplomatic tool and an essential conduit for fostering mutual understanding between nations. Although the utilization of culture by nation-states as a strategic component in foreign policy has a longstanding history, its contemporary prominence in international politics can be attributed to various factors, including the growing influence of ethnic, cultural, and religious beliefs on society and modern warfare. These developments, along with others, have contributed to the increasing recognition and popularization of cultural elements in present-day global relations (Rodríguez Barba, 2015; Saddiki, 2009). Hence, while various nations in the 20th century employed the cultural element to establish a foundation of reconciliation, collaboration, and interchange within their foreign policies, (Rodríguez Barba, 2015) it was not until the latter half of the 21st century that culture came to be recognized as a tangible instrument of politics or diplomacy. As a consequence, there is a growing trend among governments to prioritize culture in their foreign policy and diplomatic engagements, and increasingly scholars argue that cultural diplomacy serves as a fundamental and indispensable pillar of the 21st century (Saddiki, 2009).

The concept of cultural diplomacy is the intersection of two broad and elusive concepts that have in fact been subject to change over time: culture and diplomacy. There are several definitions for either of those concepts, however, an in-depth analysis of both would overcome in time and space the purpose of this work. In terms of culture, most definitions emphasize the notion of "shared system". As per the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity by UNESCO on November 2nd, 2001, culture is defined as the encompassing "distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional characteristics of a society or social group." This definition

emphasizes that culture extends beyond art and literature and includes lifestyles, social interactions, value systems, traditions, and beliefs (UNESCO, 2001). Other definitions of culture explain it as "the system of shared beliefs, values, practices, and artifacts that group members use to understand, cope with, and interact with one another and their environment, and is transmitted from generation to generation through participation and learning" (Ferris State University, 2022), or as "a set of publicly shared codes or repertoires, building blocks that structure people's ability to think and to share ideas" (Eliasoph, & Lichterman, 2003).

Diplomacy, on the other hand, since the early 20th century, has been defined as "the field encompassing the study of the social and political organization of states and the skill of harmonizing obligations, entitlements, and interests. Its objective is to preserve, assert, and enhance peaceful relationships among states" (Funck-Brentano, 1900). Similarly, in his analysis of Henry Kissinger's work "Diplomacy," James Der Derian (1995) argues that the concept of diplomacy entails a historical account of statesmen's endeavors to establish a sense of order in the realm of international politics. This endeavor involves striking a delicate balance between the realms of warfare and diplomacy, national interests, and moral considerations, as well as domestic values and international imperatives. As Rodríguez Barba (2015) highlights in her analysis, these concepts intertwine a particular approach to conducting international relations (diplomacy) with a specific domain of expression and representation (culture). This interconnection, situated within the realm of foreign policy, has given rise to a distinct practice referred to as cultural diplomacy (Rodríguez Barba, 2015).

Cummings (2009), author of one widely cited definition of the term, explains "cultural diplomacy" as encompassing the mutual exchange of ideas, information, art, and cultural elements between nations with the aim of fostering mutual understanding (Cummings, 2009). However, as it can be observed from the previous definition, the concept of cultural diplomacy lacks clarity in terms of its application, the nature of its practices, its underlying importance, and its functional processes. Despite the renewed attention from both scholars and policymakers around the 2000s, cultural diplomacy suffers from a prevalent ambiguity regarding its definition, the specific activities it encompasses, its significance, and its operational mechanisms (Ang, Isar, & Mar, 2015). According to David Clarke (2020), building upon Cummings' (2009) definition, the author puts forth the following statement: "The depiction of cultural diplomacy presented here integrates the idea of an ongoing intercultural dialogue with a seemingly interest-based communication of national policy to external actors"

(Clarke, 2020). In an endeavor to provide insights into the varied perspectives on the concept of "cultural diplomacy" within academia, Clarke (2020) examines the contrasting viewpoints of several scholars. One such example is Patricia Goff's interpretation of cultural diplomacy, which signifies a certain degree of detachment from state policies. Goff views cultural diplomacy as a mechanism to mitigate negative perceptions stemming from high-level politics. According to Goff (2013), cultural diplomacy primarily aims to bridge differences and facilitate mutual understanding, enabling the presentation of an alternative narrative about a country that may diverge from official policy implications. Conversely, as noted by Simon Mark (2010), cultural diplomacy has also been associated with more instrumental approaches, wherein the utilization of cultural means, regardless of their definition, is subordinate to the pursuit of other policy objectives.

Nevertheless, the increasing prominence of culture in foreign policy during the 20th century has resulted in the conflation of cultural diplomacy with concepts such as public diplomacy, nation branding, and soft power. This confusion arises from their shared focus on analyzing the role of culture in international relations. Overall, such pursuit of enhancing a country's reputation and perception has resulted in the blurring of lines between cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy, more specifically. Despite sharing certain similarities, it is important to note that these two terms, cultural diplomacy, and public diplomacy, do not denote identical concepts. According to author Rodríguez Barba (2015), the fundamental differentiation of cultural diplomacy lies in its objective to enhance a country's image through its historical and cultural heritage, whereas public diplomacy relies on media-driven persuasive strategies and publicity. In this sense, the utilization of various messaging and advertising tactics intended to create a "country brand" as its main objective would be better aligned with the objectives of public diplomacy rather than with those of cultural diplomacy. This is since such strategies primarily target international public opinion and the publics of foreign governments with the intention of constructing a desired perception of the country. Conversely, cultural diplomacy operates within the realm of values and traditions, focusing on artistic and cultural expressions that convey a nation's identity. In this conceptualization, public diplomacy demonstrates a strong association with the media and technology, analogous to the role of arts in cultural diplomacy (Rodríguez Barba, 2015).

The endeavors of public diplomacy aim to shape foreign opinion, leading to extensive informational initiatives (Otero, 2007). Conversely, cultural diplomacy endeavors to foster

mutual comprehension, intercultural dialogue, and ultimately the preservation of peace. Another noteworthy facet of cultural diplomacy is its long-term time horizon, wherein the effects are not immediately apparent. This characteristic sets it apart from public diplomacy, which operates within shorter, more immediate timeframes, aiming to achieve measurable and quantifiable results. Therefore, we can assert that, unlike cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy consists of a range of activities performed by a diversity of actors through propaganda, public relations, and media communication, with the purpose of addressing a specific context and directly targeting the audience of another country. This strategy of public diplomacy is ultimately linked to the concept of nation branding (Rodríguez Barba, 2015).

With a distinct delineation between the two concepts having been set, Said Saddiki (2014), an esteemed scholar in the field of International Relations, presents a range of instrumentalities that can be employed to fulfill the objectives of cultural diplomacy. These might include:

- Cultural exchange programs
- Scholarships and educational exchanges
- Establishing connections with foreign journalists, academics, and opinion leaders
- Arranging cultural visits by artists, such as painters and musicians
- International dissemination of cultural events, such as symphonies and concerts
- Organizing conferences, symposiums, and workshops centered on international cultural themes
- Language promotion initiatives
- Publication endeavors

Joseph Nye's Soft Power Theory

The preceding section has examined the notion of cultural diplomacy, highlighting its significance in the global arena and elucidating its aims and mechanisms of implementation. Consequently, the subsequent discussion will expound upon the concept of "soft power," despite its emergence after the designated research period (1930-1940). Nonetheless, comprehending the broader global context of Japan's policies during that period necessitates an understanding of this concept.

The role of culture in shaping international relations and politics has been steadily gaining significance. Joseph Nye, a renowned political scientist, foresaw in the 1990s that the

evolving power dynamics in global politics would present fresh challenges for nations in their pursuit of objectives. Nye's foresight emphasized the growing importance of culture as a determinant of power and influence in international affairs. As countries strive to navigate these changing dynamics, understanding the interplay between culture, international relations, and power becomes crucial. "Power", as defined by multiple dictionaries, is seen as the ability to influence or control people and events (Cambridge 2023), what people do or think and the capacity to achieve something or to make something happen (Macmillan 2023). According to Collins dictionary, "If someone has power, they have a lot of control over people and activities" (Collins 2023). Therefore, power in this particular context would refer to the capacity of a state to control others and influence them to perform actions they most probably might not have done otherwise.

Historically, politicians and diplomats have defined power as the possession of resources such as population, territory, natural resources, economic size, military forces, and political stability as these resources are often associated with the ability to control others in the international arena (Nye, 1990). According to the conventional perspective on IR, it was mainly the possession and control of all these resources that held the key to becoming powerful and influential amongst the other states. For instance, it was a state's military capacity and strength in war that tested the magnitude of its power. However, as Joseph Nye (1990) expected, increasingly, the definition of power is losing its emphasis on military force and conquest that marked earlier eras, while factors such as technology, education, and economic growth are becoming more significant in international power (Nye, 1990). From the 20th century onwards, at the expense of military force, other approaches such as communication, education, and persuasion, increasingly take on greater significance in all matters concerning foreign relations and global politics (Gilboa, 2008). If, traditionally, nation-states held the top position as key players in global politics, increasingly several other entities such as transnational corporations, religious groups, and non-governmental organizations have and, to this day, continue to gain greater significance and influence alongside traditional state actors.

To explain this new way of exerting power and influence towards others, the author Joseph Nye (1990) coined the term "soft power". To explain it shortly, Nye (1990) puts it like this: "In pursuit of the objective of influencing others, actors have traditionally employed two components of hard power: coercion, represented by "sticks," and inducements or payments, represented by "carrots." Alternatively, power can be exerted through soft power, which arises

from the attractiveness of a nation's values, culture, and policies." In this sense, soft power influences individuals to act through cooperation rather than coercion. Similarly, author Eytan Gilboa (2008) describes soft power as that which allows an actor to achieve desired outcomes by creating an appealing image that fosters a willingness among others to align their interests and actions with the influencing actor. Nye (1990) attributes this change in paradigm to the fact that as actors and goals in world politics change, the instruments of power used by states in foreign policy also need to adapt. The concept of security, for instance, has become more complex, encompassing economic and ecological risks in addition to traditional military concerns. In earlier periods, the costs of military coercion were lower, but today, engaging in military action is more expensive, socially challenging, and potentially self-destructive due to advanced weaponry, such as nuclear capabilities. As a result, intangible forms of power, including communication skills, organizational abilities, and alternative means of influence, have gained importance in international relations. Consequently, nation-states must possess these tools to excel in the evolving landscape of international affairs. Adapting strategies and tactics is necessary, as conventional power instruments may be insufficient to address the new challenges of the modern world (Nye, 1990).

In his 1990 publication, Joseph S. Nye coins this second aspect of power as co-optive or "soft power", in contrast to the hard or command power of forcing others to comply with its demands by using economic or military force. Nevertheless, even though it is a relatively modern tern on itself, the use of co-optive power is not a new phenomenon. As it has been seen and examined in previous sections of the present investigation, for a long time, political leaders and thinkers have recognized the potency of compelling ideas or the capacity to establish the political agenda and define the parameters of discourse in a manner that molds the preferences of others, through the promotion of culture, for example. As noted by Joseph S. Nye (1990), this form of power typically emanates and is linked to intangible power resources such as cultural attraction, ideological appeal, and international institutions – which has existed and been used by nations all throughout time (Nye, 1990). Such an idea is central and the bottom line behind the philosophy and famous adage of the ancient Chinese strategist Sun Tzu. In his work, the author of *The Art of War* argues that "It is better to win without having to fight", meaning that the most effective use of power is one that achieves its objective without resorting to conflict or the use of force. In other words, it emphasizes the importance of achieving one's goals through non-coercive means, such as diplomacy, persuasion, or the clever manipulation of the environment in one's favor. In a contemporary IR context where the use of military force

is often costly, risky, and counterproductive, the application of soft power is likely to minimize the likelihood of conflict and maximize the chances of achieving their goals in a way that is sustainable and effective in the long run.

In essence, as Nye (1990) explained while coining the term "soft power" itself:

"If a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. if its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow. If it can establish international norms consistent with its society, it is less likely to have to change. If it can support institutions that make other states wish to channel or limit their activities in ways the dominant state prefers, it may be spared the costly exercise of coercive or hard power" (p.167).

Differences between hard power and soft power as described in Table 1 of the article of author Eytan Gilboa (2008) according to behaviors, resources, and government policies.

HARD POWER VS. SOFT POWER			
TYPE	HARD POWER		SOFT POWER
	MILITARY	ECONOMIC	
BEHAVIORS	Coercion; deterrence	Inducement; coercion	Attraction; agenda-setting; co-optation
RESOURCES	Force; threats	Sanctions; payments	Values; culture; policies; institutions
GOVERNMENT POLICIES	Coercive diplomacy; war, alliance	Aid; bribes	Public diplomacy; bilateral and multilateral diplomacy

(Gilboa 2008, p.8)

In the case of Japan, the Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai or KBS) established by the Japanese government serves as a prime example of the land of the rising sun's utilization of cultural diplomacy and soft power, which gradually transformed into a pursuit of hard power during the 1930s. Initially formed in 1934, the KBS

aimed to replace the League of Nations and enhance Japan's international standing through cultural exchange, promoting peace and mutual understanding globally. However, as Japan embraced militaristic ambitions, the KBS underwent a significant shift in focus. The organization transitioned from fostering peaceful cultural exchange to actively supporting Japanese military expansion in Greater Asia. By the 1940s, the KBS aligned its actions with aggression and imperialism, complementing Japan's military ventures by disseminating narratives of Japanese dominance in "Greater East Asia." Consequently, the KBS's activities were no longer centered around peaceful collaboration but explicitly rooted in the promotion of military domination.

Cultural Internationalism

Following our earlier discussion on cultural and public diplomacy, the subsequent section titled "Cultural Internationalism" will delve into the elucidation of this crucial concept, which plays a vital role in understanding the central theme of this study. The concept of "cultural internationalism" is a complex and evolving one, as culture is a term that has been alternately defined. The following section will dive into the concept of "cultural internationalism" as understood in the book *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, by Japanese historian, professor, and author Akira Iriye. In his book, Iriye (1997) adopts the generally accepted definition of culture that understands it as "structures of meaning," encompassing memory, ideology, emotions, artistic expression, and other symbols. In this sense, according to the author, cultural internationalism involves a diverse range of activities aimed at connecting countries and people through the exchange of ideas and individuals, fostering collaboration among scholars, and promoting cross-national understanding.

Between the two world wars, cultural internationalism and geopolitical realism engaged in a meaningful dialogue. The League of Nations' "intellectual cooperation" programs exemplified cultural internationalism, while war planners in various countries promoted geopolitical realism. In this sense, the contest between cultural and military forces, or in other words, culture, and power, untroubledly shaped the interwar period of the 20s and 30s. Although cultural internationalism appeared to gain ground in the 1920s with the significant reduction of hard power in several countries, military force made a strong comeback in the following decade of the 1930s as the world prepared itself for World War II. However, as Iriye (1997) notes in chapter 3 of his book, cultural internationalism continued to assert itself in the face of violence and intolerance, even during the rise of totalitarianism and aggressive wars,

by implying that "it would be too simplistic to say that the rise of totalitarianism, and the aggressive wars launched by Germany, Japan, and their allies amounted to the victory of geopolitics and the defeat of cultural internationalism." Contrarily, Iriye (1997) argues that the suicidal decisions of the Nazi regime and Japanese leaders to take on the world represented, in a twisted sense, the triumph of culture over power. This section of the essay will examine the rise of cultural internationalism in the interwar and postwar years, highlighting how culture shaped international relations and world order.

The aftermath of World War I marked a pivotal period for Cultural Internationalism. Following the Paris peace conference, an abundance of cultural internationalist organizations emerged, as the 1920s witnessed unparalleled growth on cultural internationalism as a world-wide movement. At the begging, such movement came along as a reaction of the war and solution to the conflicts and belligerence constantly happening in Europe. In other words, proponents of "cultural internationalism" on the 1920s saw the movement as a means to achieve peace. In the midst of fervent patriotism during the war, publications such as *International Government* by Leonard Woolf and *Mitteleuropa* by Friedrich Naumann surfaced, suggesting that some individuals persisted in their belief in certain enduring trends in modern history that would ultimately lead to a more interdependent and cooperative global community, despite the temporary setbacks caused by the war. Although this may have seemed overly optimistic to readers at the time, as the war persisted, the prospect of internationalism emerging as a key factor in reestablishing world order grew increasingly likely. It is of course unsurprising that the outbreak of war unleashed nationalistic fervor and stifled internationalist movements, however its prolonged duration prompted renewed reflection on the system of interstate relations predicated on national sovereignties, identities, and interests. As Iriye (1997) explains, prior to the war, internationalism had largely been an intellectual construct that was championed by individuals who had not personally experienced the type of total war that was presently underway. However, the internationalist movements that emerged during the war and proliferated greatly after its cessation were informed by firsthand experiences, be they on the front lines, at sea, or on the home front, which gave increasing importance to the movement (p. 54).

In this social and historical context, the birth of the League of Nations exemplifies a notable instance of political internationalism, symbolizing the enduring aspiration for an institution that could foster cooperation among nations and secure worldwide peace. Its

establishment emerged as a product of the post-war emphasis on organizing efforts, driven by the belief that diverse national interests and perspectives could be harmonized through a network of organizations, reflecting a collective awareness that transcended national boundaries. In this sense, such development portrays how internationalism had taken on a more global meaning after the war, and the League's creation reflected this shift. In addition to political internationalism, there was also a renewed emphasis on economic internationalism in the post-war era, that even though it had existed before the war it became an increasingly important aspect of the imagined global community, underscoring its role in shaping the global order. However, a thorough and precise comprehension of the revival of internationalism during the interwar period necessitates the consideration of the impact of cultural diversity as disregarding its impact would result in an incomplete analysis of the resurgence of internationalism during the interwar period. As Iriye (1997) argues, the cultural aspect of internationalism could be considered in many instances a much more innovative and forceful aspect in internationalism compared to that of business. Internationalists of the postwar era highlighted the cultural, intellectual, and psychological foundations of the international order, which they considered a unique feature of their peace movement. In fact, such emphasis on cultural variety represented a significant aspect of the postwar internationalist movement and its vision for a global order based on diverse values and ideas (Iriye, 1997).

According to cultural internationalists, achieving peace was contingent on fostering cross-national understanding, which could only be accomplished through the active cooperation of cultural elites. In the 1920s, the term "intellectual cooperation" gained widespread usage, highlighting its significance as being on par with cooperation in security, political, and economic matters. Besides, the aftermath of World War I not only led to increased awareness of cultural cooperation as a means to attain peace, but in doing so, it also broadened its reach to encompass other regions of the world and their respective civilizations and traditions. In other words, the war exposed the flawed belief that the West was the sole representation of the world, leading to a critical examination of this complacent assumption. Iriye (1997) illustrates that one such example of this is, in fact, represented in one of the League of Nations' first meetings, as the Indian representative at the time advocated for the "internationalization of ideas and conditions,". In line with his view, a scholar from Haiti proposed educational reforms as a means of promoting peace. Notably, these non-Western delegates were among the first to actively broaden the cultural internationalism movement, and their proposals were given early consideration. Such circumstance presented in that sense a

highly favorable context for the expansion of cultural internationalism. Instead of reverting to the pre-war trend of Eurocentric agendas, the internationalism that emerged post-war embraced cross-cultural and intellectual communication amongst diverse cultures and philosophies, including those of Asians or South Americans, making the globalization of internationalism one of the most notable advancements of the postwar era.

Another important point to mention in relation to the evolution of internationalism, is that one can assert that the notion of intellectual communication before WWI was overtly elitist in its nature. However, a significant feature of postwar internationalism was the acknowledgment that cultural internationalism must extend beyond the elites and reach the masses in all countries. As a result of the increased exposure and impact of modern technology, particularly the radio, cinema, and telephone on society, there was a need to develop a more universal and mass-oriented form of internationalism. Or, in other words, a form that would be better understood by the masses, regardless of their geographic location. In this sense, one of the central challenges confronting postwar internationalism and internationalists therefore was the prospect of harnessing the influence of mass culture in fostering peaceful relations and cross-cultural understanding. As such, internationalists recognized the urgent need to establish a cooperative framework for regulating the content of broadcasting, given the immense power of this new medium. It was widely acknowledged that the development of a truly global internationalism hinged upon cultivating a more cosmopolitan, less insular outlook among individuals in all nations (Iriye, 1997).

Given their deep-seated interest in the spread of popular culture and concerns over the rise of nationalist sentiment, internationalists believed that education was of utmost significance. Internationalists of the interwar period showed particular enthusiasm towards fostering student and teacher exchanges across national borders, as well as revising school textbooks. In line with that argument, the League of Nations acknowledged that teacher exchanges among nations could significantly contribute to the promotion of international understanding, which is essential for maintaining world peace in the long term. Another educational development worth mentioning is the strong advocacy of Esperanto as a universal language during this period. Furthermore, Iriye (1997) suggests that there are numerous additional examples of cultural internationalism that can be observed after World War I, beyond the expressions previously discussed. For instance, museums and art galleries can be regarded as natural platforms for the promotion of cultural internationalism. Also, the Institute

of Pacific Relations (IPR), which was established in Honolulu in 1925 and later relocated to New York, represents one of the most prominent expressions of postwar internationalism. This organization facilitated discussions on Asian and Pacific issues among scholars, journalists, businessmen, and individuals from the United States, Europe, and Asia. This vision of culture, which emphasized the diffusion of culture as a prerequisite for global peace, contributed significantly to the lexicon of internationalism and aligned with the philosophy of cultural internationalism that was emerging in Europe and other parts of the world. Thus, the proposition that the dissemination of culture is essential for maintaining world peace introduced a fresh perspective on international affairs.

Unfortunately, these advancements of using cultural internationalism for peace making purposes were short-lived and were soon utilized for nefarious purposes in a changing world where the gains of the 1920s were almost entirely negated. The emergence of exclusionary nationalism, racism, aggression, and mass murder in the 1930s, meant a severe blow to the hopeful beginnings of cultural internationalism as its promising vision was significantly challenged by the opposing forces of the 1930s. However, in it being in a peaceful sense or a belligerent one, it is evident that this decade holds a significant place in the history of cultural internationalism (Iriye 1997).

a. From Japanese "Cultural Internationalism" to "Imperialist Internationalism"

As discussed in the previous section of this study, the notions and concepts of cultural internationalism, along with the belief in the importance of cultural communication and exchange, gained significant popularity in the aftermath of the First World War as a means to foster global peace. In different corners of the world, various organizations were established to encourage cooperation in all areas of cultural activity, with the most notable being the League of Nations Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, which had ties to similar committees in numerous countries, including Japan. At the same time, the emergence of cultural internationalism coincided with a growing realization among Western advocates that internationalism could not be confined to Europe and the United States. This awareness led to an expansion of cultural integration beyond the West and an increase in scholarly research on non-Western societies (Abel, 2013).

In March 25th, 1933, Japan officially withdrew from the League of Nations. Despite this withdrawal and Japan's expansionist and wartime actions, the principles of internationalism

were not completely absent from Japan's foreign policy rhetoric and practice. As argued by Jessamyn R. Abel (2013) in Chapter 2 of the book *Tumultuous Decade: Empire, Society, and Diplomacy in 1930s Japan*, foreign affairs experts still viewed multilateral cooperation as crucial to international relations, and internationalists sought to compensate for the loss of League membership by promoting cultural means of international cooperation. However, the subsequent analysis by the author reveals a shift in the trajectory of multilateral cooperation and internationalist pursuits, leading to the emergence of what can be termed as 'Imperialist internationalism.' This phenomenon occurred as advocates of Japanese imperial expansion manipulated internationalist actions and rhetoric to promote Japanese dominance in the Asian region. In essence, these initiatives were gradually co-opted by the state, transforming into a form of "imperialist internationalism," as proponents of territorial expansion distorted internationalist endeavors and discourse with the aim of advancing Japanese hegemony in Asia (Abel, 2013).

In this line of thought, the term "internationalism" has a multifaceted nature, as it might be employed in the context of imperialist endeavors as well as to contrasting aims such as peace or cooperation. Its complexity lies in its ability to be applied towards divergent and sometimes opposing political objectives. The fundamental tenet of internationalism is the belief that strengthening international institutions and fostering cooperative relationships, including communication and exchange, is conducive to promoting peace and security. Rather than a fixed notion, it is a dynamic concept that is continually shaped and redefined by people and events. Consequently, its practical interpretation changes as competing interests advance their own interpretations of what constitutes an international   l community and how it should be organized. To most people, internationalism has a favorable connotation, and even though most forms of it prioritize goals like peace, security, progress, and prosperity, not every version is inherently virtuous. It is due to the righteousness of its fundamental principles that internationalism has often been manipulated to conceal more dubious aims such as warfare or imperialistic expansion (Abel, 2013).

Although often viewed as opposing concepts, internationalism and nationalism are, in fact, closely linked ideas. As expert and historian on modern Japan, Abel (2013) explains, internationalists are often deeply patriotic and work towards advancing their country's interests through cooperation with other nations. Meaning that, internationalism is in fact, often advocated for nationalistic terms. However, internationalist rhetoric does not explicitly

promote imperialist visions of global unity under a single hegemon. Imperialism, on the other hand, is characterized by the domination of one nation by another, which contrasts starkly with internationalism. Nonetheless, the language of internationalism has played a central role in justifying and promoting imperialist actions and goals in the 20th century. The term "imperialist" describes the use of internationalist rhetoric, including claims of national independence and equality, to legitimize and further imperialist agendas (Abel, 2013).

Around the 1930s, the Japanese government commenced to interpret internationalism through more of a nationalistic perspective, employing it as a means to advance Japan's nationalist goals rather than as a vehicle for international collaboration and peace action. The Japanese military's actions in Manchuria and China, which they referred to as "cultural operations," were not related to cultural internationalism, but rather were part of their conquest. In this sense, it is worth questioning how and why the Japanese bothered to use rhetoric about culture and cultural relations while engaging in acts of aggression. For instance, from the beginning of the military conquest of Manchuria, an ambitious occupation policy was implemented to control or influence the educational, intellectual, and cultural lives of the five races in northeast China: Chinese, Manchurians, Mongolians, Koreans, and Japanese. In words of Akira Iriye (1997): "The military conquest of Manchuria was accompanied, from the outset, by an ambitious occupation policy that sought to influence, if not totally control, the educational, intellectual, and cultural lids of the people" (p. 120). On top of this, the Japanese occupiers spoke of creating a "paradise" in Manchuria, which served to distinguish their imperialism from that of other powers, but also revealed a determination to reshape the region's society and culture. They opened numerous primary schools, adult education classes, and even a central university for the education of residents (Iriye ,1997).

The establishment of joint Chinese-Japanese cultural organizations for the promotion of Asian culture, known as *Hsinmin Hui* or "new people's associations," was one of the first acts of Japanese forces as they began to invade north China. Akira Iriye (1997) mentions Fujisawa Chikao, a former official of the League of Nations who later became a leading advocate for Japanese imperialism, as he noted back in the time that nations were seeking new cultural principles, and Japan saw it as their mission to provide an answer. Similarly, Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro's declaration in November 1938 aimed to create a new order in East Asia and called for Japan, Manchukuo, and China to create a new culture and realize close economic cohesion throughout East Asia. In this sense, it remains clear that the Japanese were

eager to base their foreign policy, including their aggressive wars on the continent, on a cultural foundation. This notion of culture was parochial, pitting Japanese and Asian ways of life and thought against those of the West. Culture became an instrument of imperialism, not of internationalism, and although the two may have overlapped at the beginning of the century, they were no longer intertwined. Throughout the 1930s, the Japanese were keen to see cultural implications in their actions and promote the cultural aspect of their foreign affairs, going in the spectrum from a peaceful and cooperative note to an imperialistic, expansionist and violent sphere (Iriye, 1997).

Cultural Imperialism

In the current inquiry, an additional concept of significance to examine is that of "cultural imperialism," characterized as a manifestation of "contemporary cultural colonialism" (CCC) as defined by James Petras (1994) in his article titled "Cultural Imperialism in Late 20th Century." Petras (1994) contends that imperialism cannot be comprehended solely as an economic and military framework of control and exploitation. Rather, in the context of the global South, cultural imperialism can be delineated as the deliberate and methodical infiltration and subjugation of the cultural realm belonging to the marginalized social strata by the dominant classes in the Western world. The primary objective of this endeavor is to reconfigure the values, behaviors, institutions, and collective identity of the oppressed communities to align with the interests and aspirations of the imperial powers.

Extensive discourse in the literature pertaining to cultural imperialism has revolved around the challenge of establishing a precise definition. This challenge is compounded by the inherent complexity in defining both "culture" and "imperialism," concepts that have long been recognized as elusive and intricate in nature (Dunch, 2002). Thele Moema's seminal work in 1979 draws on the concepts of "Culture" and "Imperialism" in order to define "cultural internationalism" itself. According to this author, culture can be conceptualized as a manifestation and validation of specific values and norms that not only mirror but also project the prevailing and prospective socio-political attributes and psychological constitution of a nation, drawing upon historical antecedents. In contrast, imperialism denotes the process of dividing the global landscape into colonies and spheres of influence, which inherently encompasses elements such as warfare, exploitation, national subjugation, racial discrimination, colonial and neo-colonial systems, and economic subjugation (Moema, 1979).

First of all, the term "cultural imperialism" is widely acknowledged for its inherent lack of specificity and clarity, making the concept of cultural imperialism often being discussed without a thorough explication of its definition. Nevertheless, within academic discourse, the term generally carries an implicit definition that according to author and professor Ryan Dunch (2022) can be outlined as follows: it pertains to the ascendancy achieved by specific cultural artifacts (such as widely accepted beliefs, ideologies, and entertainment commodities) within a foreign culture, primarily through a process of forceful imposition facilitated by their association with political or economic influence. Consequently, the repercussions on the target culture and the coercive characteristics inherent in the process emerge as central concerns in the analysis of cultural imperialism (Dunch, 2002).

Similarly, according to the explanation of author John Tomlinson (2012) in his article *Cultural Imperialism*, the concept of "cultural imperialism" itself encompasses the broad phenomenon of exerting dominance within cultural interactions, wherein the values, practices, and meanings of a dominant foreign culture are imposed upon one or more indigenous cultures. In its extensive interpretation, cultural imperialism can be employed to describe instances where the cultural habits and customs of imperial powers, spanning ancient times to the European colonialism of the 19th and 20th centuries, were enforced upon subjugated populations. Nevertheless, in practical terms, the term is predominantly employed to analyze the relationships between nation-states from the mid-20th century onwards. However, there exists a significant correlation between these contemporary relationships and the term's prevalent utilization, which predominantly (though not exclusively) criticizes the persistent exercise of Western cultural dominance in the context of postcolonialism (Tomlinson, 2012).

Cultural imperialism has found application across various academic and popular writing domains, encompassing both historical and contemporary contexts. Recent instances of its usage include attributing cultural imperialism to Western mathematics, characterized as a universalistic force that has been imposed by colonial powers, overshadowing indigenous conceptual frameworks. Additionally, cultural imperialism has been associated with the global prevalence of the English language as a dominant currency, the societal construction of physical disability as a departure from "normal" human physicality (referred to as "ableism"), the establishment of "brain death" as the definitive medical criterion for death, the popularity of Elvis Presley and other American artists in 1950s Britain, as well as the fervent following

of soccer in Brazil or cricket in India. These invocations of the term predominantly emerge from a valid inclination to critique manifestations of cultural hegemony (Dunch, 2002).

Even though "Cultural Imperialism" is commonly acknowledged as a vague and ambiguous construct, amidst all the methodological and ideological diversity surrounding this concept, there exists a prevailing theoretical current rooted in Marxist influences. As explained by Maxwell (2003), the term "cultural imperialism" gained widespread recognition in the 1970s, largely attributed to the contributions of critical media theorists like Hebert Schiller (1973), who's work holds significant prominence as a central reference point for the evolution and dissemination of the concept of cultural imperialism (Maxwell, 2003). As explained by Tomlinson (2012), Schiller's focus primarily revolved around the dominance exerted by Western capitalism, particularly through multinational media corporations, in shaping the global flow of communications. This emphasis on the influence of media institutions, practices, and discourses in perpetuating cultural imperialism subsequently led to the emergence of the term "media imperialism," which, although technically a subset of the broader concept, has often been used interchangeably in practical usage (Tomlinson, 2012).

In alternative terms, the concept of cultural imperialism has been extensively examined by scholars. One notable contribution is Schiller's (1973) seminal work, *Communication and Cultural Domination.* In this influential publication, Schiller offers a comprehensive definition of cultural imperialism that remains relevant in contemporary discourse. According to Schiller, cultural imperialism encompasses a wide-ranging framework that captures the various processes through which a society integrates into the global modern world system. It sheds light on how the dominant sector of society is enticed, coerced, compelled, and sometimes incentivized to shape social institutions in accordance with, or even actively endorse, the values and structures prevailing in the central dominating core of the system (Sparks, 2015).

Moreover, Petras (1994) posits that Contemporary Cultural Colonialism (CCC) can be distinguished from historical practices based on several key factors. Firstly, CCC is characterized by its focus on capturing mass audiences, extending beyond the conversion of elites alone. Secondly, the mass media, particularly television, play a pervasive role in CCC, infiltrating households and operating from within and below, in addition to external influence. Thirdly, CCC is a global phenomenon that homogenizes cultural expressions, as the presence of universalism obscures the symbols, goals, and interests of the imperial power. Fourthly,

although the mass media may be formally labeled as private, they often serve as instruments of cultural imperialism, disguising imperial state interests as news or entertainment. Fifthly, under contemporary imperialism, political interests are projected through non-imperial subjects, as news reports highlight the personal stories of mercenary peasant-soldiers or working-class individuals from imperial nations. Sixthly, the mass media, driven by unregulated capitalism and the widening gap between promised prosperity and the reality of increasing misery and violence, further limit alternative perspectives and reinforce cultural control. Finally, cultural colonialism seeks to undermine national identities and erode their substantive socio-economic content in order to hinder collective responses. It promotes the cult of "modernity" as conformity to external symbols, attacking social bonds and reshaping personalities in accordance with media messages, all in the name of "individuality" (Petras, 1994).

Nevertheless, the concept of cultural imperialism is subject to ongoing scrutiny and debate, reflecting the diverse perspectives and critiques within academic circles. Scholars and critics have raised questions about the definition, and limitations of the concept, but most of all, critics have identified plentiful issues regarding the application of "cultural imperialism" as an analytical term, raising concerns that challenge its fundamental usefulness. For instance, according to Ryan Dunch (2002), a common flaw observed in various discussions of cultural imperialism is the tendency to substitute the "myth of cultural neutrality" inherent in knowledge systems or cultural artifacts with an oversimplified cultural determinism. In this perspective, cultural products are seen as inherently carrying certain values, which are then thought to be imposed upon a target population portrayed as passive and unaware. This oversimplification disregards the nuanced complexities of cultural dynamics and the active agency of individuals within these processes. Similarly, Dunch (2002) argues that a connected concern arises from the fact that numerous instances purportedly indicative of "cultural imperialism" are in fact driven by market forces, thereby highlighting the significant role played by consumer demand for cultural commodities (Dunch 2002). However, as author John Tomlinson (2012) states, despite these inherent weaknesses in the thesis of cultural imperialism, the process of globalization is expected to give rise to ongoing debates regarding power dynamics and domination within the cultural domain.

Japanese Pan-Asianism: Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

The 1930s witnessed a remarkable transformation in the political and intellectual landscape of Japan. One of the most striking aspects of this change was the revival and official endorsement of a pan-Asian vision of regional world order. This vision, known as Pan-Asianism, had been a prominent theme in Japanese discourse on the West and international order since the 1880s. It represented a generic term for various trends that criticized the intellectual legitimacy of Western hegemony and advocated Asian solidarity to end the Eurocentric world order. Author and professor Cemil Aydin (2013), explains that Pan-Asianism emerged as a response to the imperialist expansion of Western powers, which posed a direct threat to the sovereignty and dignity of non-Western nations. Aspects of Pan-Asianism, such as its critique of the West's unjust domination of a weak Asia, resonated with many intellectuals and policymakers in Japan who sought to restore the country's national pride and promote a more equitable global order.

In this same line of thought, Yumiko Iida (1997) the author of *Fleeing the West, Making Asia Home: Transpositions of Otherness in Japanese Pan-Asianism, 1905-1930*, explains on his part, that Pan-Asianism emerged from Japan's problematic encounter with the modern West, and was fueled by the desire to break free from their perceived inferior status as "other" in Western hegemonic discourse. The Pan-Asianists aimed to replace this inferiority with a Japan-centric worldview, hoping that it would resolve the contradictions brought about by modernization. However, this resolution was viewed through an aesthetic political lens, where the mission was to realize the beauty of "Asia" as a separate realm, free from the negative contradictions of Western hegemony. The development of Pan-Asianism was based on the elimination of its "other," creating a self-fulfilling prophecy in which history must adapt to reshape the world according to this new worldview (Iida, 1997).

Cemil Aydin (2013) explores the history of Pan-Asianism in Japan and its relationship with the country's foreign policy. The author argues that especially in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Pan-Asianism had strong advocates in Japan and began to inspire several organizations and associations in the country, which resulted on the development of a distinct set of ideas on the yellow race-white race relationship, colonialism in Asia, Western and Eastern civilizations, and Japan's grand strategy or international mission. In other words, increasingly after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), the idea that Japan was the sole nation in Asia with the ability to save the continent and reconcile the civilizations of the East and West

started to gain traction. As a result, the Japanese response to the quandary of nationalism was to assimilate civilization in order to maintain its function as the legitimizing force. As author Yamazaki (1994) puts it: "Because it "belonged" to Asia, the Japanese nation could bring to modernity the timeless sacrality of Asia, and because it had mastered Western Civilization, it could bring material modernity to Asia." The 1910s witnessed the emergence of a sense of belonging among Asian peoples as depicted in popular education journals of that time. These journals portrayed the Japanese as having close cultural and racial connections with the peoples of Asia, who were portrayed as lacking a sense of peoplehood or nation-states. This portrayal served as a warning against the threat of Western colonization and emphasized Japan's role as a leader in bringing these peoples into the modern era without destroying their traditions. This idea of intimacy with Asians was rapidly produced in the Japanese imagination during the 1910s and was reflected in the language used in the Twenty-one demands[1] made upon the Chinese government in 1915. This narrative was compelling because it presented the familial relationship between Asian peoples as natural, which could potentially mobilize an entire nation to pursue its destiny in Asia (Duara, 2001).

In spite of its intellectual appeal and its popularity at the time, Pan-Asianism remained an oppositional discourse to mainstream Japanese foreign policy until the 1930s. In other words, the ruling elites were initially cautious of embracing the movement due to their commitment to cooperation with the Western powers and concerns about their image in Western public opinion. At the same time, however, the notion of being an Eastern and yellow-race nation was becoming entrenched within Japanese identity. Therefore, although the movement might have seemed irrelevant to Japanese foreign policy up until the end of the 1920s, around the 1930s Pan-Asianism started to gain the status of an officially sponsored "alternative" vision of world order - partly due to the rise of militarism and nationalism in Japan, which placed greater emphasis on the country's role as a leader in Asia. This paradoxical tension between the desire for Western recognition and the search for an alternative non-Western identity persisted through the inter-war period, with Japanese leaders ultimately choosing a policy of imperial cooperation that was identified with the liberal internationalism of the League of Nations, but also carried elements of illiberal internationalism from the pre-war era of imperial cooperation (Aydin, 2013).

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[1]These were a set of demands presented by the Japanese government to the Chinese government on January 18, 1915, during World War I, which sought to establish special privileges and influence for Japan in various aspects of China's political, economic, and territorial affairs.

During the First World War (1914-1918), Pan-Asianist intellectuals and groups were active, seeking to emphasize Western subjugation of the colored races as the main conflict in international affairs and urging Japan to break its alliance with Britain so it could become the leader of Asia in revival. However, as an ally of the British Empire, Japan had little to gain from any pan-Asianist revolt at that time. It was not until the Second World War (1939-1945) that Japan's pan-Asianists conducted a successful public opinion campaign emphasizing that Japanese national interest would be better served by being the leader of a free Asia rather than a discriminated member of the all-white superpowers club. The adoption of pan-Asianism in Japan's foreign policy in the 1930s raises questions about what changed to allow the triumph of pan-Asianist rhetoric, either in the nature of pan-Asianist thought or in Japan's international relations. While ideas of Asian solidarity persisted through the inter-war era, with critiques against the League of Nations and socialist internationalism, it was not until the Second World War that these ideas were fully embraced in Japan's foreign policy. As Bunzo Hashikawa (1980) argues, Japanese Pan-Asianism contained two important trends: a solidarity-oriented non-dominating conception of Japan's role in reviving Asia on the one hand, as well as the conception of Japan as the harmonizing or synthesizing leader, on the other (Duara, 2001).

The promotion of Pan-Asianism as a political project culminated in the declaration of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in the 1940s. While waging their battle against the western colonial powers, the Japanese made a noteworthy declaration of their desire to establish a fresh system of governance in East Asia. The proposed model was to be realized through the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a project that relied heavily on the rhetoric of pan-Asian internationalism, and which was designed to epitomize this newfound vision, aimed on the one hand, to establish Japan as the dominant power in Asia and on the other hand, to create a new regional order that would challenge the hegemony of the West (Aydin 2013). According to Charles A. Fisher (1950), the Japanese perceived the term "Greater East Asia" as a more fitting alternative to the English expression "Far East," as it corrected the supposed misplacement of emphasis and provided a useful ambiguity due to its novelty. However, for the sake of political convenience, there was never any precise declaration in advance regarding the specific territorial scope or the intended status of the individual components. In this sense, the term "Greater East Asia" on itself is rather imprecise and ambiguous in the delimitation of its exact geographical area. However, as argued by the author A. J. Grajdanzev in 1943, "for the time being" the term could be said to encompass from the Japanese Empire, Manchuria,

China Proper, the Philippines, the Netherland Indies, French Indo-China, Thailand, British Malaya, and Burma - with the incorporation of the Soviert Far East having to be additionally considered (Grajdanzev, 1943).

The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as a concept firstly emerged during the third or fourth year of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). As highlighted by author Kenneth Colegrove (1941), in November the 3rd of 1938, Prince Konoye officially declared Japan's foreign policy, known as the New Order in East Asia, aimed at the expansion of Japanese hegemony. With the fall of the Netherlands and France in May and June 1940, indicating the imminent collapse of European colonial empires in Asia, the cabinet of Prince Konoye restated the policy on August 1, 1940, under the name of the New Order in Greater East Asia. Before this restatement, Foreign Minister Arita gave a radio address on June 29, where he proposed an interpretation of the original policy, under the name of "Greater East Asia Sphere of Co-Prosperity" where he emphasized the need for cohesion and cooperation in the economic life of East Asia and ended up remaining as the permanent interpretation (Colegrove, 1941). However, at the time, as the concept began to take shape, it remained a rather ambiguous concept in its definition. As explained by author Charles A. Fisher (1950), the closest effort to provide a definition prior to the Pacific War can be found in "A statement to the United States regarding the Three-Power Alliance (consisting of Germany, Italy, and Japan)", which was made by Matsuoka, who was serving as the Foreign Minister at that time, on 5th October 1940 (Fisher, 1950). According to the author it was explained as follows:

> "The construction of a new order in East Asia means the construction of a new order (sic) under which Japan establishes the relationship of common existence and mutual prosperity with the peoples of each land in Greater East Asia, that is East Asia including the South Seas. In a position of equality with every other country, Japan may freely carry-on enterprises, trade, and emigration in and to every land in Greater East Asia, and thereby be enabled to solve its population problem" (p.179).

Even though the term started to appear in Japanese publications and was firstly coined as a source of hope for the Japanese people who had no clear idea of the true purpose of the war beyond its immediate objective, the Co-Prosperity Sphere was intended to be a broader concept that went beyond the limited objectives of the war. In the initial phases of the war, when their military campaigns were gaining momentum, the Japanese leadership started developing policies and charting out strategies at the upper echelons of government for the Co-

Prosperity Sphere they envisioned (Swan, 1996). At large, it was envisioned as a regional bloc of countries, including China, that would be united under Japanese leadership. By intending to combat the enmity of the Chinese and all the other peoples who were forcibly included in this sphere, the Japanese government sought to convince these groups that joining the co-prosperity sphere was in their best interest and that they would benefit from the occupation. This was in line with Japan's imperialist ambitions, as it sought to expand its sphere of influence and gain access to the resources of the occupied regions (Grajdanzev, 1943). As the author William L. Swan (1996) explains in the article "Japan's Intentions for Its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as Indicated in Its Policy Plans for Thailand": "Once the war had been won, as expounded by its creators, the sphere was to become self-sufficient, be freed from the suppression of the White race, and form a realm where all the countries and peoples within would co-exist in co-prosperity under the aegis of Japan" (p.139).

In this sense, the adoption of Pan-Asianism was not simply a rejection of Western influence, but rather a search for a new global order that could accommodate both Asian and Western civilizations. Pan-Asianism represented an attempt to synthesize modernity with tradition and create a new identity for Japan as an Eastern and yellow-race nation that could lead the way in the revitalization of Asia. The adoption of Pan-Asianism in Japan's foreign policy was thus a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that reflected the country's evolving relationship with the West, its search for a new identity, and its vision for a new global order (Aydin, 2013). Similarly, such idea of a "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" is clearly framed amongst the previously addressed pan-Asianianist movement, as it aimed at creating a self-sufficient and self-reliant Asia that would be free from Western influence (Swan, 1996).

Methodology

The present investigation titled "Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for Imperialist Japan during the 1930s" employs a qualitative research design and approach that relies on secondary sources to explore the role of cultural diplomacy in Japan's foreign policy during its expansionist period. This research will be based exclusively on secondary sources, which comprise bibliography, documentation, and information previously compiled by third parties and not obtained from direct sources. No form of primary information generation, such as surveys, interviews or focus groups, among other methods, will be used for the development of this research.

The investigation begins with a comprehensive literature review to establish the foundational concepts and theories surrounding cultural diplomacy, Japanese imperialism, and the geopolitical context of the 1930s. The research design of this thesis adopts a qualitative approach, which means it relies on a comprehensive review of existing secondary sources, including scholarly books, journal articles, and relevant publications that pertain to Japanese imperialism, cultural diplomacy, and international relations during the 1930 written by experts in the field. These sources are then systematically analyzed, considering their content, arguments, and methodologies, to identify recurring themes and key findings. Based on the analysis of the secondary sources, this study draws conclusions regarding the significance of cultural diplomacy as a tool for Imperialist Japan during the 1930s. The findings are presented in a coherent manner, addressing the research questions and objectives outlined in the introduction. The conclusions highlight the role of cultural diplomacy in shaping Japan's foreign policy agenda, its imperialistic aspirations, and its interactions with other nations. Therefore, overall, by utilizing secondary sources and conducting a thorough analysis, this investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of cultural diplomacy in Imperialist Japan's foreign policy agenda during the 1930s.

The research greatly benefited from prominent secondary sources that have contributed significantly to the study. Key among these sources are scholarly books such as *Tumultuous Decade: Empire, Society, and Diplomacy in 1930s Japan,* edited by Masato Kimura and Tosh Minohara, published by the University of Toronto Press. Another influential work is *Japan's Asian Diplomacy* by Ogura Kazuo. Additionally, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* by Akira Iriye has provided valuable insights. Moreover, the investigation drew extensively from a wide range of scholarly articles authored by experts in the field of Japan and International Relations. The inclusion of these authoritative sources has contributed to the comprehensive and robust analysis conducted in this research.

Analysis and discussion

Historical Background on Japan's imperialist ambitions from Meiji (1868-1912) throughout the 1930s

To grasp the origins of imperialist actions and the underlying motivations for Japan's shift towards imperialism, it is imperative to examine the era of the Meiji Restoration in Japan. The Meiji Restoration was a period of major political, social, and economic transformation that

occurred in Japan during the late 19th century. The Meiji Restoration began in 1868, when a group of samurai overthrew the Tokugawa shogunate, which had ruled Japan since 1603. The Meiji government, which was established in the wake of this revolution, embarked on a program of reform and modernization that aimed to bring Japan up to par with the most advanced Western nations. The Meiji Restoration was a period of profound change, rapid modernization, and westernization, driven by a desire to modernize and catch up with the advanced Western nations. The Japanese people felt a deep sense of inferiority and weakness in comparison to the West, particularly due to the unequal treaties that had been imposed on them by the Tokugawa shogunate in the 1850s and 1860s. In response, the Meiji government adopted two popular slogans, "Civilization and Enlightenment" and "Strong Military, Wealthy Country," to guide their modernization efforts. As author John H. Miller (2004) asserts, Japan's overarching goal during this period was to persuade the Western powers to relinquish their treaty privileges and to establish equal relations with Japan by "convincing westerners that Japan was "civilized" (p.4).

The Meiji government's pursuit of equality with the Western powers also entailed a drive for military strength and territorial expansion. The global landscape confronting Japan in the late 19th century was fraught with danger for weaker non-Western states. As will be further addressed in the following section, the Western powers were vigorously engaged in the colonization of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, causing apprehension among the Japanese. The British annexed Burma and Malaya, the French took Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, the Dutch dominated the Indonesian archipelago, and the Americans claimed the Spanish Philippines. Only Thailand, then known as Siam, remained an independent buffer state between the British and the French. In Northeast Asia, China and Korea preserved their sovereignty but remained vulnerable to European powers, particularly Russia, whose construction of the trans-Siberian railway seemed to herald a new imperialist advance. This precarious situation left many Japanese feeling encircled and in danger. To safeguard national survival, Japan had to prevent the European powers from turning their attention to Japan by using its newly acquired military might to establish a continental empire as a defensive bulwark as "It appeared to be only a matter of time before the Europeans, having completed their conquest of the rest of Asia, would turn their attention to Japan" (Miller 2004, p.4).

Furthermore, on top of securing its survival and independence, the Meiji Japanese were drawn to the pursuit of building an empire for various additional reasons. The acquisition of

colonies was regarded as a symbol of prestige and status within the international system dominated by the Western powers, thereby signifying advancement. Additionally, colonies were believed to yield economic gains for their owners, with examples such as the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) proving this to be true. Furthermore, colonialism was thought to conform to the natural order of things, as advocated by prevalent Social Darwinist and racial ideologies. It was held that some nations were inherently suited to governing "inferior" peoples and had a responsibility to do so in the latter's best interest - or how John H. Miller (2004) puts it: "Some nations were fitted by nature to govern "lesser breeds" and were, in fact, obligated to do so in the best interests of such inferior peoples" (p.5). European imperialists viewed themselves in this manner, and certain Japanese, who believed themselves to be descended from divine beings and governed by a semi-divine emperor, were inclined to follow their example. Patriotic societies, mostly comprising of dissatisfied ex-samurai with ultra-nationalistic tendencies, championed the notion that Japan's cultural and racial superiority destined it to supplant the West as the "ruler of Asia".

In his article, John H. Miller (2004) describes the Meiji government's leaders as pragmatic individuals who were primarily concerned with securing Japan's territorial integrity, economic advancement, and international status in a world order dominated by more powerful Western nations: "Their objective was to gain control of enough territory to give Japan security, status, and economic gain within an international order that they assumed would be dominated indefinitely by stronger Western powers" (p. 5). Although some advocated for the invasion of Korea in the 1870s, the Meiji leadership, aware of Japan's military limitations relative to Western powers and China, rejected this proposal. Until the early 1890s, the Japanese government acquiesced to Chinese hegemony in Korea in the hopes of a stable and amiable Korean regime. However, as Korea descended into chaos in 1894, Japan opted to remove China by force to increase its influence in Korean affairs. The resulting Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 saw the Japanese military achieve a resounding victory over China, surprising both Western and Japanese observers. Japan's leaders imposed the same harsh peace terms typically demanded by European imperial powers on defeated non-Western nations. China was obliged to relinquish control of Korea, pay a large indemnity, cede Taiwan, grant Japan unequal treaty privileges, and lease the strategically vital Liaotung Peninsula in southern Manchuria to Japan. However, Japan was later compelled to return Liaotung following Russian pressure.

The Japanese viewed the war with China as a victory of their modernization over China's backwardness and a confirmation of their inclusion in the Western imperialist "club," resulting in widespread celebration in Japan. Nevertheless, the return of the Liaotung Peninsula to China showed that Japan was still a relatively weak power in imperialist power politics, and Russia's actions in Manchuria and Korea further threatened Japanese interests. Japan attempted to settle the matter with Russia but, after being rejected, decided on war, forming an alliance with Britain beforehand. Despite the high cost in lives and resources, Japan emerged victorious from the Russo-Japanese War, driving the Russians from southern Manchuria and annexing Korea in 1910. More significantly, Japan's defeat of a major European power granted it great power status, fulfilling the Meiji dream of equality with the West. Nevertheless, the victory psychologically removed Japan from Asia, as some saw it as an imperialist aggressor, particularly in Korea and China (Miller, 2004).

In his article titled *The Outlier: Japan between Asia and the West*, John H. Miller (2004) provides a precise depiction, asserting that Japan has consistently occupied a unique position throughout its history — "Throughout its history Japan has been an outlier, a country "in" but in many ways not "of" Asia" (p.1). In the course of its existence, Japan has often been viewed as an outlier, a nation situated in Asia but distinct from it in various ways. In premodern times, Japan's feudal order, rejection of the Chinese tributary system, and withdrawal into national seclusion set it apart from other Asian countries. In modern times, Japan has vacillated between aligning with Asia and the West, sometimes in a violent manner. During the late 19th century, Japan turned away from Asia and joined the West, transforming itself into a Western-style industrial and military power, and expanding its influence as an empire in Asia, often at the expense of China and Korea. In the 1930s, Japan rejected the West and launched a campaign to liberate Asia from Western dominance, which ultimately resulted in its total defeat and foreign occupation in 1945 (Miller, 2004).

Furthermore, in the work *Tumultuous decade: Empire, Society, and Diplomacy in 1930s Japan* collective authors illustrate Japan's efforts to establish a distinct form of internationalism during the 1930s, which involved adjusting and reacting to the fast-changing international landscape, as Japan's emerging leadership was ambivalent due to the resulting tension with the rest of the world. According to the editors of the book, Masato Kimura, and Tosh Minohara (2013), Japan sought to assert its new status and leadership in the global community during the 1930s based on its relatively strong military and economic power in the Asia Pacific region.

As mentioned earlier, since the Meiji restoration in the mid-19th century, Japanese leaders have been grappling with the challenge of incorporating Western ideas and technology while balancing it with traditional beliefs and societal structure, while also fostering Japan's military strength and rapid economic growth.

Contrarily to the 1920s, widely known as the "roaring" or "happy twenties", the decade of the 1930s were marked by a tumultuous and worrisome period for global diplomacy and cooperation. In the case of Japan, by the 1930s it had a growing population that had already reached 70 million and a booming economy that was in need of resources to continue to grow. To compete with European and American powers that had already established colonies in Eastern Asia, Japan realized it needed to expand its empire and secure new territories to meet its national interests. This need for resources became even greater during the Great Depression. The economic downturn caused by the Wall Street Crash of 1929 instilled panic at a financial level that reverberated across nations and regions. The ripple effects of the financial crisis were felt in every corner of the world and intensified already existing political tensions. Many countries turned inward, adopting protectionist policies, and seeking to safeguard their own interests, further exacerbating the isolationist tendencies that characterized the time period. Japan recognized the urgency of securing resources to maintain their economic growth, to which the "outlier" responded with the execution of the so called Manchurian incident as it sought to expand its influence and secure resources to fuel its growing economy turning to imperial expansion as a solution.

The Manchurian Incident, also known as the Mukden Incident, encompassed a deliberate bombing of a railway line owned by Japan near Mukden (present-day Shenyang) by Japanese military personnel. This orchestrated event served as a pretext for Japan to justify its subsequent occupation of Manchuria, a substantial territory in China's eastern provinces. The incident was widely believed to have been engineered by the Japanese military as a false flag operation, providing a rationale for expanding Japanese influence in the region. The occupation of Manchuria granted Japan greater control over its abundant resources, including iron, coal, and minerals, aligning with its expansionist foreign policy objectives. This incident marked the culmination of a longstanding disagreement between China and Japan and represented a crucial turning point in their deteriorating relations, significantly impacting the geopolitical landscape of East Asia. The international community widely condemned the incident, fearing that mishandling it could lead to the collapse of the established international system under the

Versailles and Washington treaties and potentially spark another major armed conflict. Consequently, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in March 1933 (Wright, 1932).

By the beginning of the 1930s, Japan had already initiated its imperialistic pursuits and subsequently, over the following 10-15 years, the country exhibited a growing tendency towards aggression. Through the implementation of their foreign policy of expansionism, Japan was able to acquire more land and resources to support its rapidly growing population, thereby providing raw materials, markets and land for its own nation which led to the fulfillment of many of their national interests. The initial success of Japan's conquest of Asia and the subsequent Pacific campaign was remarkable. Despite being outnumbered and underestimated by their adversaries, the Japanese forces, which were highly trained and disciplined, defeated the American, British, Australian, and Dutch forces, as well as their local allies. Japan's military prowess and success led it to become an imperial power. Japan's imperialism had already begun at the end of the 19th century with its victory in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), where Japan emerged victorious over Chin, and compelled the latter to abandon its claims in Korea. This victory also resulted in Japan acquiring Taiwan and the Pescadores Islands as its first colonies. Later, Japan stunned the world by defeating Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, becoming the first Asian country in over two centuries to defeat a European power (Kimura and Minohara, 2013).

a. New Age of European Imperialism (1870-1914)

In his article *"Beyond Imperialism: The New Internationalism"* the author Akira Iriye (2005) asserts that there was a period when empires played a crucial role in maintaining global order. In the early 19th century, the world was dominated by large territorial empires such as the Ottoman, Persian, Mughal, Russian, and Qing dynasties, which were characterized by multiethnic populations and maintained certain regional order as they kept local conflicts in check to varying degrees of success. Such empires were traditional imperial powers ruled by dynasties that had existed for centuries, and that whose governance extended over contiguous territories, providing a degree of regional stability. Soon after, maritime empires such as Britain, France, and Spain established a commercial regime over the traditional empires of the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia. Although there were instances of violence, such as Britain's displacement of the Mughal Empire in India, the traditional empires generally continued to function alongside the infiltration of merchants, sailors, and missionaries from the maritime powers. As Iriye (2005) explains, "These territorial and maritime empires constituted

an international order, until the last decades of the nineteenth century, time when a handful of colonial regimes established near-total control over most of the world's land and people" (p. 109).

These traditional empires were soon replaced by a new form of imperialism that arose in the late 1800s and persisted into the early 1900s, commonly known as "new imperialism." A select few nations, possessing both territorial and maritime empires, engaged in the "new imperialism" during the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century. These nations, including Britain, France, Germany, Russia, the United States, and Japan, expanded their territories overseas and established themselves as world powers. The majority of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific were partitioned into colonies and spheres of influence by these nations. The new imperialism involved the competition among these empires for control over land, resources, and people, which resulted in numerous colonial wars. Despite this, these empires managed to establish some degree of global order by stabilizing their relationships with one another and ensuring the people they controlled did not disrupt the system. In other words, at least temporarily, the imperial nations cooperated under this new order to maintain strict authority over their colonial subjects.

This hierarchical global order created a sense of unease and insecurity for Japan, prompting the country to bolster its military capabilities and pursue a more assertive foreign policy. As Iriye (2005) astutely points out, this period witnessed the establishment of a global order characterized by distinctions between dominant and dominated nations, the strong and the weak, and the categorization of some as "civilized" and others as "uncivilized" (p. 110). In other words, the fact that Japan underwent a process of militarization during the 1930s, was partly in response to perceived threats from Western powers and their expanding imperial ambitions. Japan's fear of being subjugated or marginalized in this new world order fueled its drive to build a strong military and assert its own imperial ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region. The militarization of Japan during this time was a response to the perceived need to protect its national interests and maintain its status in the face of growing Western influence and dominance.

Japan's Cultural Diplomacy Strategy throughout the 1930s

During the 1930s, Japanese cultural diplomacy focused on promoting Japanese culture abroad, with the aim of improving Japan's image in the world and increasing the country's

influence in international affairs. However, it was also used as a tool for propaganda and manipulation of public opinion abroad. As it has been already mentioned in previous sections of this investigation, throughout the interwar years, Japan was in a state of increasing militarism and expansionism. In this period, amongst other strategies, the Japanese government used cultural diplomacy as a tool to spread the ideology of Japanese nationalism and imperial spirit among Japanese communities abroad and people interested in Japanese culture around the world. The aim was to create a positive image of Japan and its role in Asia, presenting the country as a leader and positive force in the region.

In Japan, the recognition of culture as a significant aspect of diplomacy emerged at the same time as its somewhat forceful integration into the modern international system in the mid-19th century. Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) who is known as the father of the Japanese Enlightenment, was the first person to bring the attention of policymakers and intellectuals to the significance of international exhibitions through his travel writings about Europe. Fukuzawa believed that Japan's participation in these exhibitions could not only provide access to modern technology and improve its economy, but also enhance its international status and serve as a crucial tool in shaping the Western perception of Japan (Kórnicki, 1994). In 1872, the Meiji government established a dedicated bureau responsible for organizing exhibitions under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Thanks to this concerted effort, Japan's pavilions at World's Fairs were as impressive and grandiose as those of the United States and European countries (Bukh, 2014).

During the Meiji era, cultural diplomacy was not limited to international exhibitions and had various dimensions. One example is when the Japanese government took control of Taiwan and organized tours that brought the leaders of Taiwan's indigenous peoples to Japan. These tours provided exposure to Japan's modernization achievements and traditional culture, with the main objective being to instill a sense of Japan's greatness in the colonized individuals (Ching, 2000). Additionally, in 1920, the Japanese government established a division called "China cultural policy" within the Asia Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as part of its policy towards China. The primary aim of this division was to quell anti-Japanese sentiment in China, which had risen during the May 4th Movement (Kumamoto, 2013). Overall, Meiji-era Japan employed a range of cultural diplomacy techniques, including international exhibitions, internal colonization, and foreign policy initiatives towards China, to strengthen its global position (Bukh, 2014).

In his article titled *Revisiting Japan's Cultural Diplomacy: A Critique of the Agent-Level Approach to Japan's Soft Power*, author Alexander Bukh (2014) highlights the extensive scrutiny and evaluation of Japan's cultural diplomacy agents in various academic works by Shibasaki (1999), High (2003), Lockyer (2009), Park (2009), and Matsuura (2010). According to Bukh (2014), the underlying principles behind these actions on behalf of Japan can be elucidated as follows: In relation to the West, Japan aimed to present itself as distinct from other "barbarian" Asian nations, as an equal to the West, and as possessing a unique culture that harmoniously combined Western and Oriental elements. Conversely, Japan's cultural policy towards Asia, which began taking shape in the 1920s, sought to portray Japan as an integral part of Asia, emphasizing racial, cultural, and historical similarities. This cultural policy also emphasized Japan's successful modernization and positioned Japan as a natural leader in Asia. Simultaneously, Japan's cultural policy vis-à-vis Western powers incorporated the same notion.

a. The dilemma on Japan's use of soft power: East vs. West? Autonomy, Asian brotherhood, or International Cooperation?

The position of Japan in relation to "the West" and "Asia" has been a subject of curiosity and fascination for scholars and observers alike. As the first Asian nation to modernize and one of the few non-Western countries to successfully escape Western colonial control, Japan's emergence as a global power in the late 19th and early 20th centuries presented a unique case of modernization and cultural transformation. However, this turning away from Asia towards the West contributed to the development of an ambiguous national identity that has continued to impact Japanese society throughout its modern history. For the Japanese, modernization was not just about adopting Western institutions and technologies, but it involved voluntary participation in an alien game played by the "logic of civilization," which aimed to overcome their perceived inferiority and maintain their political and cultural autonomy. Yet, when the Japanese realized that modernization did not necessarily lead to achieving these goals, their perception of their past and self-image underwent a revision, with their past becoming a source of inspiration rather than something to overcome. This romantic yearning for a "lost" cultural tradition became apparent in the discursive trend of "returning to Asia" (Iida, 1997). Therefore, understanding the complex and evolving relationship between Japan, the West, and Asia is crucial for the comprehension of the trajectory of Japan's use of cultural diplomacy throughout the 1930s.

Since the Meiji Restoration, there has been a persistent aspiration among the Japanese people to establish Japan as a fully developed and "civilized" member of the global community. However, as author Dick Stegewerns (2003) clearly asserts: "In doing so they soon found themselves faced by the problem of how to position Japan vis-à-vis such entities as 'Asia', 'the West' and 'the world' (p. 16). The arrival of the West in the mid-19th century brought about a crisis for Japan and other East Asian countries due to the West's immense power and imperialistic ambitions. In response, many East Asian governments worked to establish military forces modeled after the West in hopes of defending against further encroachments. Japan, however, took a different approach by rapidly transforming itself into a Western-style nation-state with a modern industrial base and the most powerful military in East Asia, achieved through both government and private efforts - which consequently made Meiji Japan a Westernized Asian nation that had distanced itself from most of the rest of East Asia, who ended up falling under Western colonial or semi-colonial control (Miller, 2004).

Nevertheless, later, patriotic organizations, predominantly comprising of dissatisfied former samurai with extremist nationalist tendencies, started to replace previous arguments by stating that Japan's racial and cultural superiority would replace the West as main power and lead to its inevitable dominance in Asia. Concurrently, the previously addressed concept of "Pan-Asianism" emerged with two distinct variations. The first, a "liberal" faction of the movement, which argued that Japan was an essential part of Asia and had a responsibility to assist the continent in resisting Western influence. Such variant stressed the equality of Asian people and Japan's role as an impartial mentor in advancing towards modernity and freedom. However, there was a second variation of Pan-Asianism, which was in fact more in line with Japan's actions in the 1930s and early 40s: the "illiberal" form of Pan-Asianism. Rooted in the nativist and ultra-nationalist concerns of patriotic societies, this version was primarily focused on Japan's own revolt against the West, with other Asians seen as mere instruments of this endeavor. According to Miller (2004), the adoption of a "returning to Asia" stance by Japan during the 1930s was driven by a fundamental disinterest in other Asian nations, perceiving them merely as passive instruments in Japan's own revolt against the West. This ideological positioning involved rejecting Western influence and assuming the role of liberator for Asia, with Japan asserting its responsibility to establish a "New Order" consisting of Asian nation-states that would flourish under Japanese guidance and cooperation.

Understanding the complex and evolving relationship between Japan, the West, and Asia is crucial for comprehending the trajectory of Japan's use of cultural diplomacy throughout the 1930s. The emergence of Pan-Asianism and the different factions within it, particularly the "illiberal" form of Pan-Asianism, reveal the challenges and complexities of Japan's position as a unique player situated between the East and the West. Ultimately, Japan's use of cultural diplomacy during this period cannot be reduced to a simplistic analysis and requires a nuanced understanding of the geopolitical realities and cultural complexities of the time.

b. Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai (KBS)

Leading in Japan's cultural diplomacy efforts was the Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai or KBS), an organization sponsored by the state and comprised of influential policymakers and private individuals (Gripentrog, 2015). As mentioned throughout the purposes and objectives of the present investigation, this research aims to demonstrate the transformation of Japanese foreign policy during the 1930s, from an emphasis on cultural diplomacy and soft power to a pursuit of hard power. In the following section the establishment and evolution of the KBS will be addressed, as it profoundly exemplifies the focal point of this transformation. At its inception, the organization prioritized peaceful cultural exchange and improving foreign relations by showcasing Japanese culture abroad. However, as Japanese society underwent increased mobilization for war, the KBS gradually shifted its focus from promoting Japanese culture to supporting military ventures in Greater Asia. In other words, such transformation of the KBS exemplifies Japan's transition from peaceful objectives to a more assertive pursuit of power.

In April 1934, the KBS was established with the aim of fostering "mutual understanding" between different countries through cultural exchange. In other words, KBS - Japan's equivalent of the "British Council" in Britain, also founded April 1934 - had as its primary objective the promotion of cultural exchanges with other countries. The institution assumed the responsibilities of Japan's national committee for intellectual cooperation, undertook projects like exchanging visitors with foreign countries and establishing Japanese libraries overseas, and although it operated under the foreign ministry's Cultural Activities Bureau, its activities were carried out by private individuals (Iriye, 1997).

In its original conceptualization, the founding and establishment of the KBS was driven by three primary objectives: firstly, to serve as a partial substitute for the League of Nations,

which was no longer available as a platform for international cooperation; secondly, to enhance Japan's standing in the international community by promoting greater "understanding" of the country; and thirdly, to make a broader contribution to global culture. The immediate impetus for the organization's formation was Japan's exit from the League, and in fact, preparatory discussions began in June 1933, just three months after the announcement of Japan's withdrawal. According to Abel (2013), following Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations, there was an increased emphasis on alternative forms of international cooperation that were perceived as "non-political." The Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai (KBS) was established as an internationalist institution with the objective of fostering peace and security through the facilitation of global cultural exchange. This institution aimed to transcend political considerations and focus on promoting cross-cultural understanding as a means of fostering harmony and stability worldwide (Abel, 2013).

Therefore, it was during a time when Japan had recently left the League of Nations, that the KBS emerged as an organization that would fulfill some of the functions previously carried out by the League on Japan's behalf. However, one of the most common and frequent critiques after Japan's departure from the League of Nations, was that the organization was excessively centered on Europe and lacked an understanding of Japan and Asia, which was crucial for making well-informed judgments. Therefore, another important highlight on the emergence of the KBS as a governmental institution is its aim to act as a potential response to the changing diplomatic landscape, suggesting the necessity for redefining international cooperation. As aimed by its founders, another vital objective that drove the establishment of the KBS was to encourage "mutual understanding" among individuals from diverse nations via cultural interchange, to promote Japan's interests throughout the world - especially towards the West. According to Abel (2013), the founding of the society was accompanied by a grand declaration by its president, Prince Takamatsu Nobuhito, who held a prominent position as the emperor's younger brother and second in line to the throne. The prince articulated the society's objective in a lofty manner, emphasizing the significance of promoting Japanese culture abroad. He noted that such efforts would not only prevent misunderstandings and foster mutual understanding but also serve to assert the dignity of their country and contribute to the welfare of people on a global scale (Abel, 2013).

The belief that a better understanding of Japan could have resulted in a different outcome stimulated the drive to foster cultural exchange. As per the KBS prospectus, cultural

collaboration had the potential to boost Japan's global standing. The document stated that as international affairs grew more intricate and advancements in transportation and communication made the world seem smaller, scholarly, and artistic interactions, along with exchanges of popular culture, became increasingly vital. Consequently, for a nation to safeguard and expand its international position, it must demonstrate the worth and significance of its indigenous culture, alongside its actual strength in terms of wealth and power. The prospectus also expressed a desire that showcasing Japanese culture abroad would generate fondness, empathy, and admiration for Japan among individuals from other countries (Abel 2013).

During the initial years of its existence, the KBS adhered to its principles of international cooperation for mutual gain, as well as its Western-oriented approach. However, with the intensification of the war in China in 1937, the organization's outlook began to evolve. At a time when shipping out books and movies or inviting foreign scholars might appear to be low on a nation at war's priority list, the KBS prospered. While the Society's core mission persisted, war compelled it to explore new avenues, and its activities expanded. Cultural exchange continued, but its objective shifted more explicitly towards the aim of extending Japanese power and empire, as Japanese foreign policy increasingly turned from soft power to hard power. This change partly arose from greater government involvement. The Japanese government, in essence, revised Okakura Tenshin's assertion that "Asia is one" to read "Asia is Japan" and embarked on reinforcing its regional dominance by culturally Japanizing Southeast Asia. As succinctly outlined by Abel (2013), the evolving dynamics within the foreign policy bureaucracy resulted in heightened government influence and control over the semi-public organization. Consequently, the cultural activities of this organization assumed a role as a mechanism of imperialism, particularly within the context of mobilization for total war and the expansion of empire. This observation underscores the transformation of cultural endeavors into tools serving imperialistic agendas, reflecting the interplay between foreign policy objectives and the organization's activities (Abel, 2013).

As outlined throughout chapter 2 "Cultural Internationalism and Japan's wartime empire: The turns of the Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai" of the book *Tumultuous Decade*, the pre- and post-war history of KBS illustrates in fact the two contrasting aspects of "internationalism" discussed earlier in the present investigation, as the institution goes from performing "cultural internationalism" to a clear and strong "imperialist internationalism". On the one hand, after

Japan's split with the League of Nations, there was a search for alternative means of international cooperation on behalf of the Japanese government. Out of this eagerness to find alternatives emerged the KBS, consequently representing a move towards cultural internationalism, and manifesting the establishment of non-governmental avenues for diplomacy. In its earlier days, these moves were believed to be apolitical in nature, however, following the escalation of the war with China in 1937, the KBS commenced to be increasingly focused on Asia and embracing imperialist internationalism as a means of supporting Japan's regional dominance. Similarly, Shibasaki Atsushi, carries out an examination of the KBS which highlights five transformations in the organization's nature during two distinct periods: its early years (1934-1941) and the Pacific War (1941-45). Shibasaki provides a concise and useful synopsis of the impact of the escalating war on the society: amplified government control, a shift from a global focus to Greater East Asia, and a move from ostensibly two-way exchange aimed at promoting mutual understanding to unapologetically unidirectional propaganda. The society's activities underwent a change from cooperative and peaceful (albeit nationalistic) "internationalism" to imperialist "internationalism," which was surreptitious in its influence on both its domestic and foreign target audiences (Abel 2013).

As the war escalated and became more intense in 1937, the KBS increasingly shifted its focus from promoting global mutual understanding through international public relations ("cultural internationalism") to supporting Japanese military advances in Greater Asia ("imperialist internationalism"). Nevertheless, despite this shift, the KBS still maintained its rhetoric of peaceful cultural exchange towards the international community. As Abel (2013) asserts: "As total mobilization for war permeated Japanese society, the internationalism of the KBS gradually shifted from an effort to improve Japan's foreign relations through the promotion of its culture abroad to the malign internationalism of a cog in the imperialist machine" (p.19). Despite the circumstances, the editor of Kokusai Bunka emphasized that a sustainable regional community could not be built solely through military force. He perceived a "new order" arising from the "chaotic state" of global affairs, stating that while this order would initially rely on military might and be followed by the organization of politics and economics, culture must also play a vital role.

During the late 1930s, Japan entered into cultural exchange agreements with Germany and Italy, highlighting the importance of strengthening their relationships through cultural ties. The German-Japanese agreement emphasized the unique spirit of Japanese culture and the

racial and national life of Germany. Consequently, Japan established a culture center in Berlin and Germany established one in Tokyo. Similar activities occurred between Japan and Italy. The Japanese government expressed interest in expanding these programs to other areas, resulting in a proliferation of officially endorsed cultural activities and a central role for culture in government policy. This was evident in the introduction of annual "culture medals" awarded to individuals making significant contributions in science, humanities, arts, or literature. The Japanese Foreign Ministry emphasized the enduring nature of cultural ties compared to political relations, advocating alignment with the global trend of deeper intercultural relations. This shift towards prioritizing cultural issues in the 1930s reflected the economic, political, and military crises of the time, leading to the politicization of culture through official sponsorship and promotion.

Furthermore, as the war intensified, the KBS broadened its range of operations but at the same time, its geographical reach became limited. The war in Europe placed constraints on its activities in that area, while mounting apprehension in Asia, as demonstrated by Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro's declaration of a "New Order in Asia" in November 1938, prompted a heightened emphasis on the region. As Japanese military efforts turned their focus towards Southeast Asia, the KBS increasingly directed their attention to the region. They even sent an exhibit of Japanese art to Southeast Asia to showcase the "magnificent and profound Japanese culture and the essence of Japanese Spirit that constitutes it." Starting in 1940, the KBS took an active role in supporting the "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere" by striving to establish a common culture that could unite the diverse peoples of Asia. Instead of solely promoting mutual comprehension for peace, the organization aimed to construct a novel culture as the foundation for the regional identity, in line with Japan's imperialist ideology. With the previous in mind, the KBS issued its own journal, Kokusai Bunka, from 1939 to 1972. In the February 1942 edition of Kokusai Bunka, Nagai wrote an article outlining the creation of a regional culture, stating that "Japan, as the leader of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, must also be the creator of a new Greater East Asian Culture." As part of this initiative, the organization sought to establish a linguistic foundation for the culture, drawing from Japan's experiences with colonization in Korea and Taiwan, where teaching the Japanese language was a crucial aspect of converting colonized individuals into imperial subjects. In the early 1940s, the KBS undertook a project to produce and disseminate materials for teaching Japanese throughout the Co-Prosperity Sphere (Abel 2013).

By the 1940s, the KBS's primary objectives were to align its actions with aggression and imperialism by providing a cultural complement to military expansion. Therefore, as Japan carried out its imperialist expansion, the Society's main responsibility was to "spin" the narrative of Japanese domination in "Greater East Asia" as mutually advantageous. In a 1942 Kokusai Bunka article, Nagai acknowledged the challenge of persuading the people of Greater East Asia to comprehend the significance of Japan's "holy war." He showed to be particularly enthusiastic about the KBS's role in Japan's war efforts, claiming that their promotion of a Greater East Asian culture was a crucial contribution to the "holy war," and that they would recognize the benefits of Japanese intervention if the KBS could stimulate the development of their cultures. To achieve this, he claimed that "enlightenment and propaganda" were necessary, and that these should follow in the wake of military advancement in order to help them understand the ideal of the New Order in Greater East Asia. Through various means, such as producing and distributing movies, radio broadcasts, and other materials in local languages, the KBS sought to establish a cultural foundation for Japan's imperial expansion. While conversation books were intended to facilitate cooperation with the Japanese, the images and messages conveyed in these films and other materials also served to reinforce Japan's dominance in the region and the potential consequences of non-cooperation. The KBS's activities were no longer focused on peaceful international collaboration but were explicitly rooted in military domination (Abel 2013).

With the use of this two-fold strategy, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, the KBS demonstrated how the idea of internationalism could be given various meanings. The Society's original intention was to spread knowledge, but it later became a tool for promoting imperialist expansion, and later again, it returned to its more "enlightened" origins. The KBS thus represented both the potential and pitfalls of internationalism. Nationalism forms the foundation of the KBS's internationalism, as it does with many other examples of international thought and practice. While international cooperation can benefit the greater good and contribute to world peace and human welfare in ways that a single state or group could not achieve alone, internationalism is a potent concept that can be used and abused to achieve a range of goals, not all of which are desirable from a global perspective. Therefore, those who embrace internationalism must be aware of its dangers, particularly the ease with which it can be misused for purposes that contradict the internationalist mission (Abel 2013).

In summary, the mobilization efforts during total war encompassed all aspects of society, including cultural exchange. Minowa, a member of the Cabinet Information Bureau, challenged the notion that cultural activities fostering friendly relations were inappropriate during wartime. Instead, he equated the promotion of culture to a form of military combat, emphasizing the potential of disseminating the essence of Japanese spirit as a spiritual weapon alongside armed hostilities. The lead article in the March 1941 edition of Kokusai Bunka further depicted cultural exchange as a competition between cultures vying for global cultural dominance, asserting that Japan could make a significant impact in the "culture war." Consequently, cultural exchange was regarded as a strategic weapon through which Japan could showcase its culture and seek cultural supremacy during the war (Abel 2013).

Conclusion

To conclude, it remains profoundly clear and evident that Japan strategically employed culture and cultural diplomacy as instrumental means to further its imperialistic goals and ambitions during the decade of the 1930s. In addition to enhancing Japan's global standing, expanding its influence, and pursuing peaceful means to gain power in international affairs, cultural diplomacy in this period served as a remarkable tool to actively advance Japanese nationalist and imperial objectives.

First of all, linked to the first of our research objectives, Japan's imperialist ambitions throughout the 1930s were rooted in a historical context, particularly marked by the Meiji Restoration and the broader age of the new wave of European imperialism. The Meiji Restoration in Japan (1868-1912) marked a period of significant transformation driven by a desire to modernize and catch up with the advanced Western nations. Japan aimed to establish equal relations and persuade the Western powers to relinquish their treaty privileges by presenting itself as "civilized", in order to ensure national survival and protect against encirclement. To do this, Japan pursued military strength and territorial expansion, as the acquisition of colonies symbolized prestige, economic gains, and a fulfillment of social Darwinist and racial ideologies. The pragmatic leaders of the Meiji government focused on securing territorial integrity, economic advancement, and international status within a world order dominated by stronger Western powers.

The period of "new imperialism" from 1870 to 1914 marked a significant shift in global order, as a new form of imperialism emerged, with nations like Britain, France, Germany,

Russia, the United States, and Japan expanding their territories overseas and engaging in competition for land, resources, and people. This order created a sense of unease, particularly for Japan, as it faced perceived threats from Western powers and their expanding imperial ambitions. To this, Japan responded by bolstering its military capabilities and pursuing a more assertive foreign policy. During these years, the land of the rising sun engaged in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) to increase influence in Korean affairs and achieved a resounding victory. Subsequently, the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) solidified Japan's great power status but also raised concerns about its imperialist aggression.

Furthermore, the 1930s marked a tumultuous period for global diplomacy and cooperation, with the Great Depression intensifying existing political tensions and fostering isolationist tendencies. Japan, facing a growing population and a need for resources to sustain its economic growth, turned to imperial expansion as a solution. The Manchurian Incident served as a pretext for Japan's subsequent occupation of Manchuria, providing access to vital resources and aligning with its expansionist foreign policy objectives. Therefore, overall, Japan's imperialist ambitions in the 1930s were influenced by a complex mix of historical, political, and economic factors. Japan's imperialistic pursuits in the 1930s were driven by a desire to secure its national interests, including territorial integrity, economic growth, and international status, while countering growing western influence and dominance marked by the new imperialism era characterized by competition, domination, and categorization of nations as "civilized" or "uncivilized."

Moreover, regarding our secondary research aim concerning Japan's utilization of cultural diplomacy and soft power strategies, along with the pivotal role played by key cultural institutions, in the pursuit of its foreign policy objectives and imperialistic ambitions on the global platform, it is essential to acknowledge the multifaceted nature and varied goals of Japan's cultural diplomacy strategy during the 1930s. Overall, Japan's use of cultural diplomacy during the 1930s cannot be reduced to a simplistic analysis, as it involved complex dynamics and evolving relationships between Japan, the West, and Asia. First of all, one important aspect remains Japan's positioning with regards to the West and Asia. The arrival of the West in East Asia presented a crisis, and Japan chose a different path by rapidly transforming into a Western-style nation-state. Since the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese people have aspired to establish themselves as a fully developed and "civilized" member of the global community. The pursuit of modernization for the Japanese went beyond adopting Western institutions and technologies;

it involved voluntary participation in a game defined by the "logic of civilization." Japan aimed to overcome its perceived inferiority and maintain political and cultural autonomy. However, Japan's pursuit of modernization led to a distancing from other Asian nations and a desire to be seen as equal to the West.

Secondly, the emergence of Pan-Asianism, with its liberal and illiberal factions, further complicated Japan's relationship with the East and the West. In this context, a romantic yearning for a "lost" cultural tradition and a revision of Japan's self-image led to a discursive trend of "returning to Asia", bringing an ideological positioning that involved rejecting Western influence and assuming the role of liberator for Asia. The illiberal form of Pan-Asianism, driven by nationalist concerns, portrayed Japan as the leader of a revolt against the West, with other Asian nations seen as passive instruments in Japan's endeavor. In this sense, under this new Pan-Asianist ideology, Japan promoted the rejection of Western influence and assumed the role of liberator for Asia, with Japan asserting its responsibility to establish a "New Order" of Asian nation-states under Japanese guidance. Therefore, to understand Japan's use of cultural diplomacy during the 1930s, it is essential to grasp the complex and evolving relationship between Japan, the West, and Asia. The trajectory of Japan's actions cannot be simplified, as it reflects the geopolitical realities and cultural complexities of the time, and nuances of Japan's position as a unique player situated between the East and the West.

Finally, an aspect of utmost importance, if not the most indispensable to highlight, pertains to the establishment and utilization of the Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai or KBS) by the Japanese government, which unequivocally exemplifies the shift in the government's objectives from peaceful to progressively imperialistic in nature. The establishment of the KBS in 1934 Japan was driven by multiple objectives. Initially, the KBS aimed to serve as a substitute for the League of Nations, which Japan had recently exited, and to enhance Japan's standing in the international community, while contributing to global culture and promote mutual understanding through cultural exchange. In this sense, the organization's early focus was on fostering peaceful cultural exchange and improving Japan's foreign relations by promoting its culture abroad.

However, as the war in China escalated in 1937, the KBS began shifting its focus towards supporting Japanese military advances in Greater Asia. This shift was influenced by increased government control and the interplay between foreign policy objectives and the organization's

activities. The KBS engaged in activities aimed at reinforcing Japan's regional dominance and creating a common culture within the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. It sought to establish a cultural foundation for Japan's imperialist expansion through linguistic initiatives and propaganda. Therefore, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, the KBS became the perfect demonstration of the two-fold strategy of cultural internationalism and imperialist internationalism that was being carried out by the Japanese government. The KBS's activities reflected the mobilization efforts during total war, where cultural exchange was viewed as a strategic weapon to showcase Japanese culture and seek cultural supremacy. In other words, in the end, the organization's objectives shifted from promoting peaceful international collaboration to serving as a tool for military domination.

In relation to or topic of research, further investigations or lines of research can explore several avenues of inquiry. First of all, carrying out a comparative analysis would allow for a comprehensive understanding of Japan's cultural diplomacy and soft power strategies by examining similar efforts undertaken by other countries during the 1930s. Secondly, examining the role and activities of additional cultural institutions in Japan, beyond the Society for International Cultural Relations (KBS), can provide a more nuanced understanding of the interconnectedness between cultural diplomacy and imperialism. Furthermore, analyzing the impact of cultural propaganda employed by Japan during that period would shed light on the mechanisms used to shape public opinion, and exploring the effects of Japan's cultural diplomacy on neighboring countries and the broader East Asian region would provide insights into regional power dynamics and diplomatic relations. Also, it could be interesting to investigate the role of ideology, such as Pan-Asianism, in shaping Japan's cultural diplomacy and imperialistic pursuits more deeply, as it could deepen our understanding of the underlying motivations. Lastly, studying the long-term consequences and legacies of Japan's cultural diplomacy and imperialistic policies would shed light on their lasting impact on international relations and regional dynamics. Shortly, all the previously research avenues would without doubt highly contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between culture, diplomacy, and imperialistic ambitions in the 1930s.

In conclusion, overall, the case of the KBS illustrates the complex nature of internationalism and how it can be interpreted and utilized for various purposes. International cooperation can contribute to global welfare and peace, but it can also be manipulated to serve nationalistic and imperialistic goals. From its creation, the KBS played a crucial role in Japan's

cultural diplomacy efforts, as it aimed to foster mutual understanding between different countries through cultural exchange, enhance Japan's standing in the international community and served as a substitute for the League of Nations as it emphasized promoting cross-cultural understanding as a means of fostering harmony and stability worldwide. However, as the war in China intensified, the organization's outlook shifted, and its activities became more explicitly focused on extending Japanese power and empire. The KBS's cultural activities began serving imperialistic agendas, reflecting the interplay between foreign policy objectives and the organization's activities. Consequently, the presence and evolution of such an organization emphasize the imperative nature of undertaking a thorough examination of the motivations and repercussions of international endeavors, given that even seemingly benign and peaceful aspects like culture have demonstrated their utility in advancing imperialistic agendas.

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